



**Representative Brian Hatfield**

19th Legislative District

September 2003

**S**pending on prescription drugs is increasing dramatically. Certainly, coastal and South-west Washington citizens — no less than people anywhere else — are using more prescriptions these days. In the 2003-2005 budget period for the State of Washington, prescription-drug spending will climb as high as \$1 billion for medical programs that support low-income families, elderly citizens and disabled citizens.

Taxpayer dollars support these programs. The Legislature must keep that fact in mind in making sure this public money is spent wisely. Our state's health-care programs — as well as our Washington businesses and other prescription-drug buyers — must find a way to deal with the increasing costs that stymie their ability to afford health coverage.

It's not all about economics, either — it's a quality-of-life issue, too. Often today, doctors are hindered in their work for patients because many folks just don't have the money for prescriptions. And sometimes, a patient takes fewer doses to make the drug last longer!

***Skyrocketing prescription-drug costs***

**T**oo many citizens know all too well this nightmare of skyrocketing prescription-drug costs. It's extremely hard for people who don't have good (or any) insurance; they must pay a higher price for their medicine (if they even get it). So many citizens are forced to choose between their prescription — and a decent meal or some other basic need.

In the Legislature earlier this year, we approved a **bipartisan** policy to:

- ✓ Adopt a preferred-drug list based on the best medical evidence.
- ✓ Provide bulk buying power, which means the state obtains volume discounts for disabled citizens and low-income citizens over 50 years old who are eligible for this new program.



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## ***Fact sheet: PRESCRIPTION DRUGS***

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- ✓ Allow doctors to prescribe the drug they believe is the very best one for their patients (even if it's not on the list) by writing "Dispense as written" on the prescription.
- ✓ Educate consumers and providers about the new prescription-drug list.

### ***Lower-priced, equal-quality medicine***

**F**or years, we've been confronting this prescription-drug nightmare. The twin challenge has always been to improve the **quality of care** — while making prescriptions more **affordable**. This year's legislation is aimed at keeping lower-priced, **equal-quality** medicine available for all Washington people whose doctors say they need it. I understand that 590,000 citizens qualify for the program — including 177,000 folks who didn't have coverage.

Importantly, the program uses the best science to get the **right drug** to the **right person** at the **right time**. Our objective today is to get the most value out of every tax dollar — and one day to open the program to every Washington citizen.

The bipartisan policy is supported by AARP, consumer groups, business groups, and the medical association.



**For further information — and to share your comments:**

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